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Author: Ruth B. Wisse

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Ruth R. Wisse

September 20, 1965.



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FOREWORD

Writing on the Jewish contribution to culture in Canada in these days of Bilingualism and Biculturalism is like coming as bridesmaid to the Wedding: your presence may be charming, but the marriage would go on without you. The position of Canada's other ethnic minorities, when set against the recent crisis in English-French relations, is more ambiguous than ever, and their problems of cultural survival seem relatively insignificant. Nevertheless, since roughly one quarter of the Canadian population is neither French nor English, the smaller ethnic groups can hardly be ignored in any appraisal of the total culture.

An examination of the contributions of various ethnic groups can reveal the extent of non-English, non-French participation in the cultural development of Canada. It may also show the distinct quality of each group's contribution, and gauge the possibilities of maintaining cultural multiplicity in the future.

FOREWORD

Writing on the Jewish contribution to culture in Canada in these days of Stalinism and Hitlerism is like going to a wedding: your presence may be desired, but the marriage would go on without you. The position of Canada's other ethnic minorities, when set against the recent crisis in English-French relations, is more ambiguous than ever, and their problems of cultural survival seem relatively insignificant. Nevertheless, since roughly one quarter of the Canadian population is neither French nor English, the smaller ethnic groups can hardly be ignored in any appraisal of the total culture.

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I     The Past:   The Development of a Canadian Jewish Community

    Ii                           Earliest Period, 1759-1840

    In 1959, the Canadian Jewish community celebrated its national bicentenary, marking two hundred years since Aaron Hart, commissary officer in General Amherst's invading army, and the first permanent Jewish settler in Canada, arrived in Montreal. Jews had been present in Canada much earlier, and had played a variety of roles in both the French and English explorations of the country. But under French rule they had been prevented from settling by virtue of a Bourbon decree whereby non-Catholics were barred from all French colonial possessions. It was not, therefore, until the latter half of the eighteenth century, after the British conquest, that pockets of permanent Jewish settlement in Canada were formed.

    The organized life of Canadian Jewry began in 1768, when the Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel) Congregation, the fourth oldest synagogue on the North American continent, was founded in Montreal. Its earliest members were merchants, fur traders, and others attached to the British army, who had come from Britain and from the southern colonies. It had been presumed for many years that these were Sephardic, Spanish and Portuguese, Jewish descendants. More recent probing seems to suggest that most of the earlier settlers (like the later Jewish settlers) were in fact Ashkenazim, or of German and central European origin.



The years 1760 to 1840 inclusive are referred to as the first period of Jewish life in Canada, a period during which the Jewish population increased from fewer than 12 to 154. This span of eighty years, according to one historian, was characterized by "economic, social, and political progress of Jews as individuals on the one hand, and by stagnation in Jewish religious and community life on the other".<sup>1</sup> This appraisal seems justified, although the minute size of the community was probably in itself the strongest reason for communal inactivity. Individual Jews, however, acted as Chief of the Quebec City Fire Brigade, inaugurated the first direct sailing ship service between England and Canada, built the first saw and grist mill in Canada, served as director of the Bank of Montreal, fought in the Canadian militia in the War of 1812, installed the first municipal water system in Montreal, and generally took advantage of the pioneering possibilities in an atmosphere of trust and acceptance.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Rosenberg, Louis, "Some Aspects of the Historical Development of the Canadian Jewish Community", Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society. Vol. L, No. 2. December, 1960, p. 129.
  2. Sack, Benjamin G. History of the Jews in Canada. Montreal, 1945.



Relations between Jews and their neighbours were almost uniformly good, with one exception: Ezekiel Hart, elected on three successive occasions as member of the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada for Three Rivers, was refused the right "to sit, or vote" because he professed the Jewish religion. This incident was the first overt manifestation of anti-semitism in Canada, but it had a salutary effect. The Jewish citizens and others protested strongly, and a Bill was passed by the Legislature of Lower Canada in 1831 declaring "that all persons professing the Jewish religion are entitled to the full rights and privileges of other subjects of His Majesty... and capable of taking, having, or enjoying any office or place of trust within this Province". Canada was thereby almost twenty-five years in advance of England, "the mother country", in granting full political emancipation to Jews. Actually, most modern commentators feel that opposition to Hart was motivated more by political and economic considerations than by any anti-Jewish feeling. Hart was identified with English-speaking interests, and the French-Canadian majority in the Legislative Assembly may have seen him as a threat to their control.

In its earliest period, then, Jewish life in Canada was marked by a very high degree of acculturation, by the absence of any social, economic, and for the most part, even political differences from the total community, and hence by religious distinction only.



Iii Immigration, first stage, 1840-1881

Subsequently, the structure of the Canadian Jewish community changed radically. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century immigration rapidly increased, and "Jewish immigration to Canada....(which) followed, more or less, the course of general immigration to Canada...<sup>1</sup>.", kept pace with the overall increase.

Before 1881 the reasons for Jewish migration from Europe were the same as those of other Europeans - the breakdown of small-scale agricultural units and the sudden effects of industrialization created economic pressures which drove people to the newer World. Any instability in the economic life of a country was bound to affect its Jewish population immediately because of the marginal occupations into which Jews had been driven, and to which they had adapted themselves. The Jewish population of Canada grew to 2,443 by 1881. Settlement was still almost exclusively in the east, and the majority of newcomers were English or central European by descent.

Iiii Immigration, second stage, 1881-1921

In 1881 a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms broke out in Russia, and Jewish refugees by the thousands followed those who had come less desperately before. By this time the trans-continental railway

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1. Kage, Joseph. With Faith and Thanksgiving, The Story of Two Hundred Years of Jewish Immigration and Immigrant Aid Effort in Canada (1760 -1960). Montreal, 1962; p. 14.



had been completed and some Jews travelled westward where they settled in Winnipeg or in pioneer farming communities. There was also a trickling of immigrants from the Western United States into the west coast region of Canada.

Formerly Jews had come as immigrants, but in the wake of the pogroms, the majority came as refugees, and it was in response to the needs of these impoverished exiles that the Canadian Jewish community organized and strengthened itself. By the end of World War I, there were 126,196 Jews in this country, and the pattern of Jewish living had changed completely from the earliest period of settlement.

Iiv                    The Emergence of the Modern Community

The reasons for the changes in the Jewish community of the twentieth century are many and varied:

A.            External Influences:

Aa                    Separatism of English and French

It has often been said, but it remains no less true, that whereas immigrants to the United States of America felt a strong pressure to become assimilated, those coming to Canada were under strong pressure to remain distinct. The rivalry between the English and the French civilizations "established a tradition of separatism in Canada, that was upheld, with only slightly less obduracy, vis-à-vis the other ethnic groups.... This separatism, in turn, encouraged



the minorities to remain cohesive, even clannish." <sup>1</sup>. The small group of several dozen Jewish families that lived in Lower Canada during the earliest period were easily integrated into the English community. But several thousands of Jewish immigrant families, especially those settling in Eastern Canada where the lines between English and French communities were firmly drawn, could not, if they wanted to, become fully integrated with either.

Ab        Growing Hostility to Immigrants

In the eighteenth century Canada was new, the economic possibilities were unlimited, there was little of an entrenched status quo. By the beginning of this century, although Canada was still new, there were those who felt that "foreigners" could be a threat, that immigrants would deprive previous settlers of their jobs; that economic opportunities were limited, and should be reserved for those already in the country. Hostility towards new arrivals became marked, and encouraged the immigrant ethnic minorities to remain "among their own kind".

Ac                      Anti-Jewish Hostility

The Jews, easily identifiable, and in Christian tradition since the fourth century, a justifiably persecuted group, were the butt of much of this hostility. Anti-Semitism became a problem.

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1.        Sachar, Howard Morley. The Course of Modern Jewish History. New York, 19. p. 505



There was a story told of a Jewish peddler in Quebec who knocked at the door of an English-Canadian household, was politely received, but turned away without a sale. He then knocked at the door of a French-Canadian house, the master shouted "maudit Juif", but the mistress bought something all the same. This story was current in the 1920's; that it is still repeated today (the peddler has been replaced by a salesman) indicates its continuing relevance to the Jew's experience: he senses the surface cordiality of the English-Protestant community, and the sharper, though mitigated antagonism of the French Catholics.

In the 1930's the influence and nature of European anti-semitism was keenly felt in Canada, particularly through the words and deeds of Adrien Arcand and his fascist followers. Some of the tracts published by this, and similar nationalist movements, were as ugly as those of Hitler's spokesmen. The presence of an active fascist party in Canada, in the light of Germany's subsequent extermination scheme in Europe, was not destined to encourage rapid Jewish integration.

Since the end of World War II there have been far fewer open manifestations of anti-Jewish bias, but it is doubtful whether prejudices have disappeared. In the big cities, excepting academic and certain professional circles, there is little social interaction between Jews and their neighbours. And, of course, the reaction to anti-semitism would continue even after it itself had been eradicated.



As Oscar Handlin, noted American Jewish historian, points out:

The more permanent consequence of all the racial agitation was upon the Jews themselves. The shocking realization that their place in American society was being questioned affected their continuing adjustment to American conditions. Coming as it did in decades unsettled by depression and war, the strain of struggle against anti-semitism consumed much of the group's energy and left a significant impress upon a still uncertain future. <sup>1</sup>.

This is easily true for Canadian Jewry as well, and it suggests, for example, why there is such fear among Quebec Jews today of the growing Separatist movement. A French-Canadian journalist recently remarked with surprise in a T.V. interview that discussions of Separatism are much more prevalent among Jews than among either English - or French- Canadians. "They think and worry about it more than we do." The Jews, conscious of recent history, cannot remain unconcerned.

Ad                      British Law and Tradition

It must be stressed that although the foregoing sociological forces have discouraged integration of Jews with either the English or French communities, there is nevertheless the significant fact of the law, and the British tradition, which has allowed Jews, among others, to live in "an atmosphere of almost unqualified freedom".

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1.        Handlin, Oscar. Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America. New York, 1954. P. 210.



Because of the divided nature of the country, because of the growing coldness to the immigrant, and the latent and expressed hostility to Jews particularly, Jewish community life in Canada has become more cohesive than anywhere else in the western world. Yet the effective protection of law reinforced by tradition has enabled individual Jews to take full advantage of the economic opportunities, and to a slightly lesser degree, of the social, political, and cultural opportunities as well.

As

#### The System of Education

The system of education in Canada, particularly in the Province of Quebec where about 40% of Canada's Jews have resided, had a direct bearing on the development of the Jewish community. It would require a separate study to do justice to this aspect of influence on Canadian Jewish life --and indeed, such studies have been written <sup>1</sup>. --but for the purposes of this essay, the following bald summary must suffice:

The denominational school system in Quebec encouraged the founding of separate Jewish parochial schools whose enrollment has increased steadily since their inception. There are active, growing day schools in Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, and although none of these schools (including those in Quebec) receives government support, most exist in Provinces where

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1. Beker, Lavy M., and Rosenberg, Louis. "Jewish Education in Montreal" in Jewish Education. Winter-Spring 1950-1951. Vol. 22, No. 1-2



the government does, in fact, support, and thereby encourage, other denominational schools. Unlike the United States, where the public schools were probably the strongest single integrative force, Canada has permitted the growth of a polyglot, religiously - differentiated network of schools. In the case of the Jewish population, the result has been that there is a larger percentage of Jewish children receiving intensive Jewish education (elementary level) in Canada than in any other country in the World, excepting Israel.

An evaluation of these schools will be found elsewhere in this paper.

B      Internal Influences

There are "internal" factors, in addition to the above-mentioned "external" factors, that influenced the development of the Jewish community along its present lines.

Ba              Homogeneity of Jewish Immigration

In contrast to Jewish immigration to America, which was heavily German before 1880 and almost exclusively eastern European after 1880, Jewish immigration to Canada was fairly homogeneous in the major years of settlement. In the U.S.A. a solid German-Jewish community formed in the nineteenth century. It assisted, but did not really interact with, the later Jewish arrivals from Russia and Poland. The American Jewish community, largely because of this, and because of its numbers, has remained divided. Comparatively few German Jewish immigrants came to Canada, however, and there was



no German-Jewish "aristocracy" to greet the Russian refugees of the 1880's and early 1900's. The common language, Yiddish, the shared ethno-religious customs and traditions of the majority of Jewish immigrants to Canada were influential in shaping the relatively unified Jewish community of this country. And so in 1919 it was possible to convene a Canadian Jewish Congress to which delegates from all communities and ideological groups were invited, and which later became a permanent central body "concern (ing) itself with general problems affecting Canadian Jewry and...the supreme authority representing Canadian Jewry at home and abroad".

For a people that says of itself, "two Jews, three synagogues" in a country that is plagued by more areas of difference than of unity, the establishment of such a central body was of crucial importance, and time has proven its value. As an organized community the very small group of Jews in Canada was able to accomplish far more than groups in other countries of comparable size. Their similarity of background first enabled Jews throughout Canada to organize, and the superstructure they established subsequently facilitated their working together.

Nevertheless, divisive tendencies continued to exist. The rapid change in population distribution makes central planning more



difficult than ever before. <sup>1</sup>.

Bb

### Transplanted Vitality

The vitality of Jewish life in eastern Europe was extraordinary, and its four centuries have been called "the golden period of the Jewish Soul." It was in this tradition, as has been said, that most of Canadian Jewish immigrants were raised, and this vitality in religious, social and cultural undertakings they brought with them to Canada. Within a short time after their arrival, the Jewish newcomers from eastern Europe set up organizations and fraternal institutions, synagogues, newspapers, cultural activities, to facilitate their integration and the integration of still more recent immigrants, and to replace those they had left behind. These institutions mushroomed and evolved through the years, and many of them stand at the centre of Jewish life today.

Bc

### Influence of Highly-Orthodox and Hassidic Jews

An interesting and little-explored factor in the contemporary life of Jews in Canada (also in America) is the energy and influence of the ultra-orthodox and the Hassidic sects. Jews who came from eastern Europe at the turn of the century were frequently more "ethnic" than "religious" in their Jewish identification. Even those who observed Jewish law and ritual tended to divorce the Jewish from the general aspects of life. They strove to give their children

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1. Rosenberg, Louis. "Changing Needs of the Jewish Community", Research Papers of Canadian Jewish Congress, Series A, No. 4. May, 1958. Mr. Rosenberg writes: "The process of dispersion has speeded up so much that a process which took 15 years previously takes only 3 years now." p. 3.



a good general education first, and only then did they concern themselves with Jewish learning. They quickly learned the language(s) of the area, and were far more eager for their children to speak English, occasionally French, than for them to excel in Yiddish or Hebrew. Though they might observe the Sabbath, maintain the distinction between kosher and non-kosher food, stress the Bar-Mitzvah, frown upon inter-marriage, they nevertheless placed far greater emphasis upon the economic and social values of their new surroundings. So that many jokes are told, like the one about three Jewish mothers bragging about their sons: the first whose son is a lawyer earning \$25,000 a year; the second whose son is a doctor earning \$30,000 a year; the third whose son is a rabbi, earning \$9,000 a year. To which the first two react indignantly, "A rabbi? What sort of job is that for a Jewish boy?" Jewish humour is often the Jew's recognition of his actual values juxtaposed with his idealized self-conception.

But there are few such jokes told about the ultra-orthodox Jews, who came after the main waves of immigration, in the 1940's and later. These groups, small in numbers, have formed enclavic pockets within the Jewish community itself. Unwilling to exchange their way of life for any other, they try to maintain even the mode of dress of their previous environment. They have established elaborate school systems within several years of their coming, which



take a child from kindergarten through college. And the birthrate among these groups is high, whereas the birthrate among other Canadian Jews is considerably lower than that of the total population.

These newcomers are a threat to some Jews, as they seem to hinder the smooth process of integration: "Suppose a gentile should identify that bearded patriarch with me?" But others look upon this uncompromising bulwark against assimilation with secret relief: "No matter what I do, the survival of traditional Jewry in Canada is assured". The orthodox yeshivot are able to raise considerable sums of money from Jews who would not send their own children to these schools, and who probably regard their donations as expiations for their own "backsliding".

The ultra-orthodox and Hassidic Jews form far less than 10% of the total Jewish population in Canada, and their actual interaction with other Jews is slight. Spokesmen for Canadian Jewry usually ignore this group when interpreting or representing the Jewish community. Yet their presence has, to a degree, reversed the normal integration pattern.

Canadian Jews were most highly acculturated in the very earliest period of settlement; between 1840 and about 1940 they were differentiated by ethnic characteristics, including language, customs, and religious affiliation, from the surrounding population, but there was much interaction between Jews and non-Jews, and a



willingness to assimilate values of the new culture. Only now, in the latest phase of Jewish life in Canada do we have what usually comes at the beginning - enclavic groups, intent upon maintaining in unadulterated form their traditional mode of living.

Perhaps the influence of these groups is here being exaggerated. If so, it is only because it is too often completely ignored. Many contemporary Jews suffer serious doubts about their Jewish identity, and Jewish cultural activity is often concerned, not with intrinsic Jewish matters, but with the problem of identity itself - "What is a Jew? Crisis in Jewish Identification. The Future of North American Jewry". The Hassidic and highly orthodox Jews take their identity as Jews for granted, and devote their creative, intellectual energies almost exclusively to intrinsic problems of Biblical interpretation, Talmudic law, reconciling ancient ritual with modern science and technology, etc. So it is clear that in the cultural sphere particularly, the presence of these groups is of great importance.

Bd

#### Influx of French-Speaking Jews

The arrival of some one thousand French-speaking Jewish families from North Africa and the Near East in recent years has added still another dimension to the Canadian Jewish community. Almost all these families settled in Quebec, some identifying with the local Jewish community, others merging completely into the French-Canadian environment.



The Canadian Jewish Congress in 1947 established a Cercle Juif de Langue Française to encourage closer ties between Jews and French-Canadians, and to serve as a cultural outlet for French-speaking Jews. A monthly publication has been appearing for several years and today has a circulation of 5,000.

In response to the influx of these immigrants many Jewish organizations, including Bnai Brith, Hadassah, the Golden Age Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, have created French-speaking chapters. It is possible that the presence of French-speaking newcomers coupled with a growing interest in French Canada on the part of many young Jews, will bring about a gradual change in the affiliation of Quebec's Jewish Community, heretofore with the English minority. There is a definite trend in Montreal of educating Jewish children in French schools. Were there any public non-denominational French schools in Quebec, this trend would undoubtedly become more pronounced.

#### Iv

#### The Jewish Population 1921-1961

Since the end of World War 'I, when the policy of open immigration was replaced by a quota system, the growth of the Jewish population depended on the fluctuating legislation of the Canadian government. Between 1921 and 1941 20,176 Jewish immigrants settled in Canada. In the crucial years of 1936-41, when Nazism had clearly indicated its intentions towards the Jews, only 762 were allowed permanent entry. Of course, the depression legacy of unemployment,



poverty, and fear, was largely responsible for the tight immigration restrictions, which affected all potential settlers, not only Jews. Ultimately, however, the effect upon Jews was proportionally far greater, as by the end of the war, one-third of the World Jewish population had been annihilated. One cannot help but wonder what difference a more liberal immigration policy - not only in Canada, but in the rest of America - might have made.

In 1961, the Jewish population of Canada numbered about 265,000 (according to religious affiliation), or 1.43 of the total population. It is predicted that the percentage of Jews among the total population, down from 1.50 in 1951, will continue to decline because of the lower birthrate among Jews, and the decrease in Jewish immigration.

The concentration of Jews in the large urban centres has been evident from the beginning of Jewish settlement in Canada, and this concentration has become even more pronounced in recent years. The much higher rate of intermarriage in the smaller towns suggests that their Jewish communities will decline, either because of intermarriage of Jews with non-Jews, or because of the departure of those who fear their children may intermarry.



## II Cultural Contribution: Into the Mainstream

The major aim of this essay is to define and evaluate the cultural contribution of the Jewish ethnic group, both to the mainstream of Canadian life, and to its own enrichment. The word "culture" is not being used in its anthropological sense, to describe the total pattern of human behavior, but rather in the more limited sense of the intellectual and artistic content of civilization.

x x x

The intellectual tradition has been for centuries a major cohesive force in Jewish life. In the more than 2,000 years of dispersal, Jewish communities judged themselves, and were judged by others, primarily in terms of rabbinic scholarship, of creative interpretation of the Code of Law. When the Koran, in the seventh century, derogatorily spoke of Jews as "the People of the Book", it was referring to Jewry's single-minded devotion to the Book, the Bible. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, however, much of this same intellectual energy has been rechanneled from religious into secular concerns. So that when the expression "People of the Book" is used today, it is almost always secular in implication, referring, for example, to the disproportionately large number of Jewish writers, bookstore-owners, and readers. It is not surprising that in Canada, as elsewhere, the most significant Jewish contribution



to the general culture has been in the area of literature and scholarship.

### III

### Literature

Recent literary and sociological studies have begun to distinguish a Jewish area of Canadian literature. Jean Falardeau, in analyzing the differences between English and French writing in this country, suggests that:

For most English-Canadian novelists, the novel as artistic expression is more the description and analysis of a social situation than a plunging into the depths of an individual soul...the only non-French Canadian novelists whose works have a vertical dimension...are of Jewish origin. Of all the English-speaking Canadians, the person of Jewish ancestry is the one whose cultural heritage is the richer (sic). He is deeply rooted in it, both in Canada and abroad. Whether he accepts it or not, he feels bound to a fate, the beginning and the end of which are given from above and against which he must, like Jacob against the Angel, fight alone.<sup>1</sup>

He concludes that Canadian Jewish novelists have much deeper affinities with French-Canadian novelists than with English-Canadian writers, whose language they share.

In an essay on "Poetry and the Novel," Roy Daniells remarks:

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1. Falardeau, Jean-C. Roots and Values in Canadian Lives, University of Toronto Press in co-operation with Carlton University, 1961. pp. 16-17



To any review of Canadian writing such as we have attempted, there is an *arrière pensée* which comes with increasing insistence. The traditional French and English branches of our literature require the addition of a third classification - that of Jewish-Canadian writing.... Within the general search for self-identification...which we have seen to be the hall-mark of Canadian literature, this special focus of self-consciousness represents a fanning into flame of the collective Hebrew mind by the great winds of world persecution and of world-wide hope inspired by faith.<sup>1</sup>

Like Falardeau, he distinguishes a new sub-grouping in Canadian literature with an importance and with characteristics of its own. Both these critics feel that the dominant theme of Canadian Jewish writing is the struggle of the individual within his tradition, or fate. "Oppositions of constraint and freedom, loyalty and rebellion, faith and scepticism, seek a resolution."<sup>2</sup>

For the major Jewish literary figures in Canada, their Canadian-Jewish identity has not been incidental: it lies at the heart of much of their work. Both A.M. Klein, in The Second Scroll,<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. Daniells, Roy. "Poetry and the Novel" in The Culture of Contemporary Canada, edited by Julian Park. Ithaca, Ryerson Press and Cornell University Press, 1957. pp. 72-74
  2. Ibid, p. 74
  3. Klein, Abraham Moses. The Second Scroll, New York, Knopf, 1951.



and Adele Wiseman, in The Sacrifice<sup>1</sup>, have taken actual confrontations from their own experience and raised them to the level of myth. In the chaotic post-war period, A.M. Klein launches his hero-narrator on a search for meaning in the destruction of European Jewry. The young Montrealer sets out to find his uncle, Melech Davidson, (King, Son of David), or his personal Messiah, and though the boy follows a trail of despair through displaced persons camps, European political intrigue, the degrading mellah of Casablanca, and though he sees signs everywhere of his "uncle's" progressive loss of faith, he finds at the end sufficient cause for affirmation of the miracle of God's presence, particularly in the recreated State of Israel. The book gives poetic expression to the sense of loss, the struggle of cynicism against persistent optimism, of much of post-war Jewry. (Expressed on an inarticulate level in the millions of dollars Canadian Jews send to Israel -in goods, bonds, donations- each year).

Adele Wiseman's focus is on the European Jew as he adjusts to Canadian soil. In The Sacrifice, the modern Abraham, an immigrant Jew from Russia, "sacrifices" his son to his own conception of Jewish greatness. He cannot reconcile himself to the materialism, the

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1. Wiseman, Adele. The Sacrifice. Toronto, MacMillan and Co., 1956.



crude pioneering reality of Winnipeg, and his inability to bend results in murder (both symbolic, and actual). The sacrifice of the first two generations does not seem to be in vain, however, because the grandson begins to be able to face the ugliness of much of surrounding reality without surrendering his sensitivity or his drive for a higher expression of human potential. The material of the book is drawn from the Jewish experience in Canada, but it goes without saying that its implications are universal. The opening section, in which Abraham, travelling westward by train, cannot communicate with the conductor, is one of the most penetrating descriptions of the immigrant's experience in all of contemporary literature.

One feels that Klein and Wiseman set out to probe a personal and local condition, but wanting to escape the small-town quality that a realistic Canadian novel might easily have, they hitched their stories to Jewish myths, and thereby succeeded in projecting them in terms of magnitude. Using organizing schemes from their own traditions, ones which are also part of universal culture, (Advent of the Messiah, Abraham's Call to Sacrifice Isaac) these two Canadian writers overcame the hazards of "colonial fiction". Most critics agreed that The Second Scroll and The Sacrifice are among the major Canadian novels, and important contemporary works by any standards.



In the United States, Jewish writers have recently emerged as exceptionally insightful interpreters of American life, and the works of Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Norman Mailer, Ivan Gold, among others, have been acclaimed as true expressions of the contemporary American condition. Although it would seem natural that Canadian Jewish fiction - on the same continent, in the same language, by members of the same ethno-religious group - should share the qualities of American Jewish fiction, there are, in fact, many points of difference. The contrasts help to clarify some important distinctions between creative Jewish artists in Canada and those in the U.S.

The hero of American Jewish writing is most often an urban product, standing outside of any community, and alienated from his Jewish heritage and from the group or segment of life in which he was raised. Characters like Stern,<sup>1</sup> Herzog,<sup>2</sup> Levin,<sup>3</sup> Steven Rojack,<sup>4</sup> and many others, have in common a sense of isolation, and each is trying to find his own viable ethical or spiritual code. Thus many

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1. Friedman, Bruce Jay. Stern. New York, Simon and Schuster, 1962.
  2. Bellow, Saul. Herzog. New York, Viking Press, 1964.
  3. Malamud, Bernard. A New Life. New York, Farrar and Strauss, 1961.
  4. Mailer, Norman. An American Dream. New York, Dial Press, 1964.



have pointed out that the American Jewish writer is giving expression to the rootlessness, isolation, lack of identity, alienation of the urban dweller, of a great part of the total American population.

The hero of Canadian Jewish writing, on the other hand, is far from being alienated or marginal to his community, or lacking in a sense of identity. He is afflicted by precisely the opposite condition. Raised in and bound by a strong community and family tradition, he is being suffocated by a set of values he cannot accept, and he must break away, become alienated, before he can attain selfhood. Mordecai Richler's Noah Adler in Son of a Smaller Hero<sup>1</sup> and Leonard Cohen's Lawrence Breavman, in The Favourite Game<sup>2</sup> were raised on opposite sides of Mount Royal, one in the poor immigrant ghetto, the other in the upper middle-class ghetto of Westmount. Yet each of them is oppressed by the set pattern of life into which he is expected to fit. The two heroes mature by testing and rejecting the prescribed values and goals of family and community. In the same vein

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1. Richler, Mordecai. Son of a Smaller Hero. London, Andre Deutsch, 1955.
  2. Cohen, Leonard. The Favourite Game. London, Secker and Warburg, 1963.



David Brotman, hero of M. Charles Cohen's CBC-TV Festival production, David, Part II, is the product of Winnipeg, but he too has been taught what a good Jewish boy must do: romantic affiliation with Israel; flirtation but no involvement with left-wing politics; nice marriage to Jewish girl of prosperous family; safe professional career. The extent to which he accepts or rejects the formula is, according to the playwright, the extent to which he fails or succeeds as a human being. Unlike his American counterpart, then, the Canadian fictional young Jew grows up as part of a cohesive, identifiable group, bound by certain rituals and traditions, and by sociological and economic drives that have become rituals and traditions. And just as the American Jewish writer is giving voice to the more general American situation, so too the Canadian Jewish writer is expressing the experience of the French-Canadian, Ukrainian-Canadian, even the English-Canadian, which is still quite different from that of his American cousin.

Unfortunately, claustrophobia is not merely the condition of the heroes, but of their creators as well. The American Jewish writer is part of the cultural mainstream of his country. His experience is as typical as that of any other American. When recognized, he becomes part of the intellectual life of the country, his work is widely read, and studied as an indigenous American product. In Canada, the Jewish writer begins as part of the Canadian Jewish community, a much narrower berth. There is little of a cultural mainstream with which



he can identify, since he is neither French-Canadian nor English-Canadian. The tiny circumference of the local Jewish community is too tight, and as he must free himself from his overbearing environment, he often leaves. Richler and Norman Levine went to England, Leonard Cohen to Greece, Jack Ludwig, Lionel Shapiro, and others to the United States, and they return only occasionally, as Cohen says, "to renew my neurotic affiliations." It is often pointed out by the younger budding writers that A.M. Klein, who remained, has ceased to write.

In short, while all Canadian writers suffer the same economic disadvantages and limitations of readership, the Jewish writer is further burdened by psychological confinement, being part of a small community within a small community.

The most prolific, best-known contemporary Jewish poet in Canada is Irving Layton. His twelve volumes of poetry between 1951 and 1963 have done what little of modern poetry manages to do: they have been read, they have inspired interest, anger, imitation. In his case too it is clear what a mixed blessing a cohesive environment can be. Layton believes that the poet has taken over the mantle of the prophet. His pained and angry opposition to the flatulence, particularly of his own Jewish community, has given impetus to his productivity, and has provoked the conscience of his younger readers.



This same involvement has sometimes made him more bitter than passionate, however, and personal vendettas enter into his later publications.

There are numerous writers and poets- Henry Kreisel, Eli Mandel, Miriam Waddington, and several dozen younger artists- whose work has not been included in this brief analysis, but whose contributions to Canadian literature have already been recognized.

Northrop Frye, Canada's leading literary critic, writes about:

the perennial dilemma of the English-Canadian poet: the fact that he is involved in a unique problem of self-identification, torn between a centrifugal impulse to ignore his environment and compete on equal terms with his British and American contemporaries, and a centripetal impulse to give an imaginative voice to his own surroundings.

He adds at a later point that of all groups in English-speaking Canada:

the Jews are in a most favourable position to deal with (this) environmental dilemma. They form a close Canadian community which is immediately linked to other parts of the world, and the advantages of belonging to such a community have been exploited by both Jewish poets and novelists, especially novelists.<sup>1</sup>

The Canadian Jewish writer is often closer to his past, more familiar with its culture, more able to draw creatively from its

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1. Frye, Northrop. "Poetry" in The Arts in Canada, edited by Malcolm Ross. Toronto, MacMillan, 1958. pt. 88.



sources than is the American Jewish writer. His historical and cultural heritage puts him at an advantage when compared with other "rootless" contemporary writers, and at the same time his experience as "the outsider" gives him an added insight into many of today's special problems. It is probable that all the factors here mentioned will encourage the continuing development of Canadian-Jewish literature, both in quantity and in quality. But the same "link to other parts of the world" of which Northrop Frye speaks, combined with the lack of a vibrant cultural mainstream in Canada, and a resulting sense of stagnation will probably make the Canadian Jewish writer no less peripatetic tomorrow, than he is today.

## II ii

### Entertainment and Communications

The participation of Jews in fields of entertainment and communications is, in Canada as elsewhere, disproportionately high. Wayne and Shuster are probably Canada's best-known comedians, and other radio and TV personalities of Jewish descent include Nathan Cohen, for many years the moderator of Fighting Words, Percy Saltzman of weather-prediction renown, and Bert Pearl of the "Happy Gang".

Actors Lorne Greene, William Shatner and Lloyd Bochner now live in the U.S., but like Toby Robins, Paul Kligman, young Peter Kastner, their names are identified with Canadian theatre and TV.

There have been many notable Jewish directors and producers on radio and television, including Rupert Caplan, Leo Orenstein,



Harvey Hart, Clifford Solway, Stan Harris and Sydney Newman, who is now head of drama, BBC-TV, in London. Herbert Steinhouse and William Weintraub, in addition to their work on radio, in production, and in film, have also written words of journalistic fiction. One of the most important figures in Canadian theatre is John Hirsch, head of Winnipeg's Little Theatre, who came to Canada as a survivor of the war, in 1947.

Among Canadian script-writers and playwrights are Mac Shoub, Charles Israel, Ted Allen, M. Charles Cohen, and several younger Jewish talents. This is not an exhaustive listing.

One point warrants observation: Whereas in the United States Jews may be found at every level of the communications and entertainment industries, among the studio-heads and network directors as well as among the actors and scenarists, in Canada there are no Jews in the upper echelons of the CBC or the National Film Board. Whether this is because of a very subtle discrimination policy, or because no individual Canadian Jew has earned the distinction, must be determined by those who are in a better capacity to judge.

#### IIiii

#### Scholarship

According to Louis Rosenberg, Director of Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, in a book called Canada's Jews, there were in 1931 no more than eleven Jewish professors, university lecturers and junior college principals in all of Canada. In the same book Mr.



Rosenberg wrote: "Wherever anti-Jewish discrimination is removed or is non-existent, it will be found that a large percentage of Jews will turn to salaried professions instead of 'fee-earning' professions." <sup>1</sup>. This prediction has certainly proven true in the academic sphere, to which Jews have been gravitating in increasing numbers, and with marked success.

It is difficult to estimate how many Jews are presently employed as professors and lecturers in the various Canadian colleges and universities. There are dozens at each of the major schools, and there are numerous Canadian Jews teaching in universities in the U.S.A. and elsewhere. Canadian Who's Who, 1964 lists approximately 175 Jews of whom 36 are associate and full professors at major Canadian universities. Among them are Maxwell Cohen, dean of McGill's Law Faculty; Marvin Duchow, former dean of McGill's Faculty of music; Sydney Friedman, Chairman of the Department of Anatomy, University of British Columbia; I.I. Glass, head of the Department of Aeronautical Engineering and Aerophysics at the University of Toronto, and Edward Rosenthall, Chairman of the Mathematics Department at McGill. Raymond Klibansky of McGill and Emil Fackenheim of the University of Toronto have made significant contributions to modern philosophy, and their published works are widely acclaimed.

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1. Rosenberg, Louis. Canada's Jews. A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada. Montreal, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939. p. 192.



The presence of Jewish scholars is particularly marked in the field of mathematics and in other areas of medical and social science.

II iv

Music and Art

There are valid objections against the tendency to subdivide cultural productivity into national or ethnic categories. These objections apply particularly when musical and artistic expression is analyzed along ethnic lines. At least literature and theatre are concerned with the transmission of ideas, which may be the direct result of a particular ethnic environment. But musical and artistic "ideas" are of a different sort, and except in such cases as when Smetana deliberately uses the folk themes of his native Bohemia, or when Picasso paints Guernica as a reaction to the Spanish Civil War, the national origin of a composer or artist rarely exerts a direct influence on his work. Indirectly, however, it may be relevant: a nation may stress or minimize the importance of music. A particular climate may suggest certain rhythms or colours. A people may consider it sacrilege to fashion "graven images".... Let us admit that the musician and the artist contribute as individuals to the total culture, but that their ethnic origins are not completely irrelevant in an analysis of their work.

The Jewish attitude toward music, and more especially toward the plastic arts, has undergone a change in the past century.



Following the second destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the Jewish mode of worship, was through study and prayer, with little emphasis on music, and with an almost complete rejection of the visual arts. But the Hassidic movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emphasized joy of worship through song and dance as well as through learning. The movement as a whole has, of course, a much broader significance, but one of its immediate effects was to activate the dormant Jewish interest in music. At the same time the more enlightened segments of European society demanded more liberal attitudes towards the Jews, and the breakdown of the ghettos exposed Jews to the general culture. While the civil service and many of the trades and professions remained closed to Jews, the commonwealth of intellect was open, and no paths to acceptance and fame were as accessible as those of culture and arts. So Jews began to experiment with the European modes of artistic expression, and in the field of music the achievement of individual Jews has been quite exceptional.

In Canada, in the nineteenth century, the Nordheimer brothers, Bavarian Jewish immigrants, established a national music business with headquarters in Toronto which "operated on a scale larger than any other music supply house in the country." <sup>1</sup>. They set up their own

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1. Kallman, Helmut. A History of Music in Canada. 1534-1914. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1960.



piano factory in the 1880's, and continued to run it for forty years.

The influence of Jewish musicians in Canada is particularly great today. Canadian conductors include Victor Feldbrill of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra; Walter Susskind of the Toronto Symphony; Alexander Brott of the McGill Chamber Music Orchestra in Montreal; Abraham Fratkin of the Edmonton Philharmonic Orchestra; Eugene Kash, former conductor of the Ottawa Philharmonic; and Ethel Stark, of the Women's Symphony Orchestra.

Pauline Lightstone Donalda, since her retirement as a well-known dramatic soprano, has been a teacher in Montreal and is founder-director of the Opera Guild. The work of Sarah Fischer as a voice teacher, and as a promoter of new musical talent is of great importance in exposing young performers to the public. A younger figure in Canadian opera is Irving Guttman, musical director of many of the major operatic productions that have taken place in Canada within the last few years.

Among the recognized Canadian composers are John Weinzwieg, founder of the Canadian League of Composers, Alexander Brott, Otto Joachim, Harry Adaskin, Saul Honigman, Oscar Morawetz, Istvan Anhalt, and Louis Applebaum, who was musical director of the Stratford Festival from 1956 to 1960. Sometimes these composers have made direct use of Jewish thematic material - John Weinzwieg in his Sonata Israel for cello and piano; Alexander Brott in Chassidic Dance. But more often it is the composer, not his music, that can



be called Jewish.

There are, in addition, numerous outstanding Canadian Jewish performers, among them Hyman Dress, and Milton Blackstone, violinists; Walter Joachim and Zara Nelsova, cellists; Ellen Ballon, Neil Chotem, pianists; Melvin Berman, oboist; Alan Mills, folk-singer; George London, baritone.

The world-wide Jewish interest in music is thus as evident in Canada as elsewhere. The percentage of Jewish musicians in Canadian orchestras is considerably higher than might proportionally be expected. And there is a predominance of Jews in the record and record-distribution businesses, particularly in the larger cities.

The involvement of Jews with the visual arts followed their involvement with music by a century, probably because of the traditionally strict interpretation of the second commandment, and because there was no force comparable to the Hassidic emphasis on music to reinterpret the meaning of art in Jewish life. However, contemporary Jewry has not only produced a number of excellent artists; it has also begun to reevaluate the importance of aesthetics in synagogue architecture, and the function of art as an expression of religious feeling.

Canada has had a number of important Jewish artists: William Raphael and Ernst Neumann are of an earlier generation, as is Alexander Bercovitch, best known for his land and sea-scapes, particularly of the Gaspé coast. The work of William Raphael, first



known Canadian Jewish artist, hangs in collections of the National Gallery, Ottawa; the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa.

In today's Canada, there is naturally no "Jewish group" of artists, but there are many Jewish painters and sculptors, and there do seem to be certain representative tendencies among them.

Anne Kahane and Marcel Braitstein, both of Montreal, are well-known sculptors. Miss Kahane works mostly in wood. Her entry in the world-wide Unknown Political Prisoner exhibition, held in Britain in 1952, won first prize. She does many studies of groups of people - a crowd watching a baseball game; a "delegation", apologetic rather than diffident; a line-up for a city bus; - which are considered among her best works. Braitstein sculpts in metal. His tragi-comic pieces are usually figure and personality studies, though more often of individuals than of groups.

Louis Muhlstock, Moe Reinblatt, Eric Goldberg, Jack Markell, Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, Aba Bayefsky, Maschel Teitelbaum and Stanley Lewis are all nationally recognized artists, Mr. Lewis for his sculpture as well as for his stone-prints. The younger professional Canadian-Jewish artists include Tobie Steinhouse, David Silverberg, Jan Menses, Karl and Loretta Rix, Chaki, formerly of Israel, now of Montreal, Seymour Segal. It is interesting that whereas there has



been a noticeable shift to abstract art on the part of more and more Canadian painters, most Canadian Jewish artists have continued to focus on the human figure, and on other representational subjects. Louis Muhlstock, for example, produced a series of abstracts at one point in his career, but this was, in the words of Robert Ayre, "a self-contained experience, outside his normal preoccupations with humanity and domestic animals...."<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, almost all these artists have experimented with, but have not settled into abstract painting, whereas the general tendency toward non-representational art has sharply increased. Is this coincidence, or are there reasons why Jewish artists are more eager to translate into visual terms the experiences of actual life than to abstract its colours and shapes and forms?

As in the case of music, the artists occasionally make use of Jewish subjects and themes. Stanley Lewis has spent time in Israel where he did a series of stone-cuts based on the Ten Commandments; Jan Menses continually reworks the experiences of the concentration camps and the relations of victim and victimizer; Chaki exhibited an entire collection of work on the theme of Creation. But it would be foolhardy to make generalizations about the use of Jewish material in their art, or about the direct influence of their Jewish background on their artistic development. One can only venture to

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1. Ayre, Robert. "Painting" in The Arts in Canada, p. 17.



suggest, as has been done, that there is a marked attraction to representational work, and especially to interpretations of human individuals and groups. And for the most part, Canadian Jewish artists have not shared the whimsical folk-feeling of Chagall, or the boisterous folk-feeling of Mane-Katz. Some of the art has been sombre, as in the brooding faces of Ghitta Caiserman-Roth, or of terrifying intensity, as in the work of Braitstein and Menses. Some of it has been gentle and tender, as are Louis Muhlstock's deer, the light-studies of Tobie Steinhouse. Much of it has been of outstanding aesthetic merit.

## II v

### The Jews as Audience

The foregoing is by no means a complete survey of the contribution of Jews to the mainstream of Canadian culture. Not all persons of note were mentioned, and some categories, such as dance, architecture, the pure sciences, were omitted entirely. What has been dealt with is the general quality of Canadian-Jewish culture, and the kinds of contributions Jews have tended to make. To this end, it may be appropriate to add some words about the Jews as audience.

The breakdown of religious conviction more than a century ago strongly affected the Jewish community. But much of the traditional reverence for scholarship, for the rabbi and the Jewish man of learning, has been transferred in modern Jewish life to the writer, the creative artist, the secular intellectual. It is not



strange that Irving Layton defines the poet as prophet. Many of his Jewish readers subconsciously, if not consciously, subscribe to the same definition. The arts are taken very seriously by many Jews as a substitute for the ethical instruction of religion. Particularly does this apply to literature, but it carries over to the other art forms. The cultural contribution of Canadian Jews as audience and patrons is at least as meaningful as the contributions of individual creators and performers.

In the United States, Jews are said to form an estimated 20% of the book-buying public though they are about 3% of the total population. Is the same proportionally true in Canada?

How does Jewish financial support of local symphonies, museums, and cultural ventures compare with that of other segments of the population? In The State of Quebec, reporter Peter Desbarats writes: "According to one authority, Jewish art purchases (in the province) equal those made by both French-Canadian and Anglocrat patrons and 'only the Jewish community does any important buying of art.'" <sup>1</sup>. One impresario estimates that roughly half of Toronto's serious theatre-goers are Jews, and an editorial of the Orillia "Packet and Times" on the Stratford Festival, 1965, says the following:

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1. Desbarats, Peter. The State of Quebec. Toronto, McClelland and Stewart, 1965. p. 36.



Another curious feature of Stratford audiences is the large and growing number of children who attend. Nearly all of the organized and well-behaved groups of children attending are Jewish, which may reflect the superior sophistication and cultural standards of Jewish children or even of the Jewish People as a whole, for certainly Jews are among the most consistent supporters of the festival. <sup>1</sup>.

Individual Jewish patrons, like the Bronfmans, Samuel and Ayala Zacks, the Gelbers, have made significant contributions to Canadian cultural activities.

The last remarks are inadequately documented, and no more than suggestive. Perhaps future studies could examine the cultural attitudes of the Jewish group to see what influence they have on Jewish cultural consumption, and what influence this audience participation, in turn, has on the totality of Canadian cultural activity.

### III Jewish Culture: Within the Community.

It is one of the painful paradoxes of the North American pattern of integration that the more fully an ethnic minority adapts itself, the less of a distinctive contribution can it continue to make to the total culture. The Jews who came to Canada brought with them cultural baggage that included a spoken language, Yiddish; a reading knowledge and appreciation of Hebrew; a folk heritage of customs, songs, stories, sayings, and beliefs; a storehouse of religious and secular writings; a tradition of learning, and of

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1. Reprinted in Inter-Office Information of Canadian Jewish Congress, compiled by Samuel Lewin, No. 493, August 20, 1965.



devotion to one's people and to God. Any evaluation of Canadian Jewish culture must take into account the extent to which this material has been nurtured, creatively used, or neglected, within the Jewish community itself.

### III i

### Synagogues

Throughout the history of Jewish migration, congregations came first. The establishment of a synagogue was the first indication that ten or more male Jews had settled in a particular location. In Canada today, each of the 50 communities with more than 100 Jewish residents has at least one congregation housed in its own building, and "15 of the smaller communities, with 10 to 20 Jewish families, also have synagogues".<sup>1.</sup> There are more than 200 synagogues in Canada, approximately 175 of them orthodox, 25 conservative, 7 reform. and 1 Reconstructionist.

In former times the synagogue was the House of Prayer (Beth Tefilah), the House of Study (Beth Midrash) and the centre of communal activity (Beth Haknesset). Jewish congregations in North America, whatever their affiliation, have themselves become acculturated: they are now almost exclusively places of worship, only secondarily centres of communal activity, and very rarely places of learning. Most

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1. Rosenberg, Louis. "Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada", in Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory, 1963. Ottawa, 1963, p. 189.



congregations sponsor Sunday schools and adult education lectures. But the first five-day-a-week Jewish schools to take root in Canada were established by secular leaders outside the synagogue movement, and only recently have congregations undertaken to build day schools and to encourage intensive study in Jewish areas of learning. The exceptions, as noted earlier, are the Hassidic groups who immediately set up and have continued to foster complete education networks in Montreal and in Toronto.

A century ago, most Canadian congregations "imported" their rabbis from England. Today, almost all congregations (with the same afore-mentioned exception) engage rabbis who were born and educated in the United States. There are no conservative or reform rabbinical seminaries in Canada. The four Canadian highly-orthodox yeshivot have graduated about thirty rabbis since 1941, a few of whom have taken Canadian pulpits.

The derivation of rabbi is "rebbe", my teacher, which originally defined the rabbi's educational and scholarly role. In Canada, as in all of North America, today's rabbi is regarded as the spiritual leader of his congregation, and his role has been redefined along the lines of the pastor. Since most Jews have transferred their involvement with learning into secular areas, they no longer demand a high level of Jewish scholarship from their Jewish leaders.



One young rabbi recently said in a sermon that when studying for the rabbinate he and his fellow students had often challenged one another on points of observance and law, anticipating the questions that would be posed by members of their future congregations. The one thing he had not anticipated, the rabbi concluded, was that his congregation would ask no questions at all.

Synagogue membership is rising in Canada, as in the United States. However, as sociological studies show, the boom in membership does not necessarily imply an upsurge of piety or even of interest. "It may simply be", as TIME magazine editorialized in a recent essay, "a part of the American feeling that everybody is supposed to belong to something." 1.

No doubt the new kinds of synagogues will produce a new kind of culture. In the meantime, the synagogue is not the repository of rabbinic scholarship it once was; and the ethical problems of interpreting the Law are the concern of a much smaller percentage of Jews, and consequently of a smaller percentage of rabbis.

Like most generalizations, this one too has its exceptions. The Reverend Abraham de Sola, of London, England, who was minister of Montreal's Spanish and Portuguese Congregation between 1847 and 1882, was an outstanding scholar and a dynamic leader. He taught Hebrew

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1. TIME Magazine, June 25, 1965, p. 26



and Oriental Literature at McGill University, and was the first Jew to receive an honorary degree at that university in 1858. Rabbi J.L. Glaubert, came to Toronto from Poland, and was regarded as spiritual head of the Polish Jews between the two World Wars. His authority in delivering responsa was recognized throughout the world. Rabbi P. Hirschprung personifies the traditional conception of rabbi-teacher in contemporary Montreal. Rabbi Chaim Denburg's annotated English translation of the Shulchan Arukh, the Code of Hebrew Law, was published in 1954, and is a modern contribution to Jewish scholarship, as is Moshe Sambatyon's two volume Talmud Encyclopaedic Dictionary. Other publications by Canadian rabbis - books by Rabbis Abraham Feinberg, Stuart Rosenberg, Harry Stern, to name only a few have been more "outer-directed", more interpretive than analytical of Jewish law and experience.

### III ii

### Jewish Education

#### A

#### Elementary level

The statistics pertaining to elementary Jewish education are the pride and joy of Canada's Jewish community. In 1960 it was estimated that at least 60 per cent of Jewish children of elementary-school age attended some type of Jewish school, and that 17,500 of these attended for at least seven years. Some 4,500 children are enrolled in five-day-a-week schools that teach the regular curriculum of the local non-denominational or Protestant schools in addition to



several Jewish subjects. There are Talmud Torahs, emphasizing Hebrew, religious, and Biblical studies; secular schools that place an equal emphasis on Yiddish and Hebrew, and stress the historical, ethnic character of the Jewish people; congregational schools, associated with either the orthodox, conservative or reform movements; ultra-orthodox schools and yeshivot, where the focus is on religious study, and where Yiddish is the language of instruction in all except the secular disciplines; and at least one remaining school of radical leftist ideology. Of the 26 day schools in Canada, 13 are in Montreal, 5 in Winnipeg, 2 each in Vancouver and Calgary; 1 is in Ottawa, and 1 in Edmonton. Toronto has a secular school of Labour-Zionist orientation, and 6 branches of the Associated Hebrew Free Schools. The instruction in these institutions is generally good. The graduates, who have been exposed to an accelerated program of regular plus Jewish subjects in the normal five-hour daily schedule, usually maintain an above-average scholastic standing when they enter the public high schools and colleges.

Those who do not attend day classes are enrolled in afternoon schools or Sunday schools, or receive private instruction at home, often in preparation for the Bar-Mitzvah.

As the Jewish school movement in Canada expanded, the need for teachers of Hebrew and Yiddish subjects increased. The schools could not continue to be staffed indefinitely by European-trained



educators. The Canadian Jewish Congress set up teacher training centres in Toronto (evening program) and in Montreal (day and evening programs) and so adjusted the curriculum as to prepare graduate teachers for Jewish schools of almost every orientation. These seminaries were at first highly successful, but the standards have not been maintained in recent years. The seminaries lack prestige in the Jewish community, and fail to attract the more qualified candidates. There is not enough financial backing or enthusiasm to provide adequate instruction or facilities. Were it not for the influx of teachers from Israel (both trained, and untrained) the Jewish schools in Canada would not long be able to open classes for all those who wished to enroll.

B                      Advanced level

As the level of schooling rises, the number of young people receiving a Jewish education drops sharply. Most Jewish teen-agers receive no Jewish education at all. There are several five-day-a-week Jewish high schools with small student bodies; enrollment in the afternoon school program generally declines after Bar-Mitzvah age.

On the college level, with the single exception of the University of Manitoba, there is no program of Jewish Studies at any of the major universities. Even where Jewish students may form 20 percent of the student body in the Faculty of Arts, there is only an introductory course in Judaism, or a section on Judaism in a course on



Comparative Religion. Thus, outside the ultra-orthodox movement, there are no opportunities for formal Jewish study at an advanced level in Canada. <sup>1</sup>.

It would then seem, from this imbalance, that a major part of Canadian Jewry is eager to provide its children with elementary Jewish instruction. But when the child matures in his intellectual probing, and steers into avenues of job-selection, Jewish studies fall far into the background as an area of educational importance. Since Judaism is not a folk-culture, but a way of life demanding and emphasizing study, this attitude, if it persisted, would radically affect the whole nature of Jewish existence.

Within the past few years, many younger Canadian-born Jews have realized that the problem of living a meaningful Jewish life in Canada requires serious consideration. This realization gave rise to innumerable study programs, lectures, discussions, dealing with the Jewish identification in the Canadian setting. And in turn, the discussions are stirring up a new interest in Jewish learning. Organizations like Hadassah, Bnai Brith and the Zionist movements, that were once wholly philanthropic and/or social in their orientation, have introduced educational programming as a part of their work. The

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1. Maimonides College in Winnipeg actually operates its program of Jewish Studies at a high school level, and its enrollment is very limited.



Montreal Y.M.-Y.W.H.A. created an Institute of Jewish Studies for adults, offering more than a dozen courses in areas of Jewish learning. Some synagogues are experimenting with home study groups, while others give afternoon and evening instruction in Bible, Talmud, and Jewish observances.

These efforts, while important, do not replace formal academic study. Unless some continuity is provided for Jewish youngsters after their elementary Jewish schooling, their early training will probably have little meaning in later life. It would appear that only if the Jewish community is ready and able to create academic institutions of higher learning, or to persuade existing colleges and universities that Jewish studies be included in their curricula, will the intellectual and ethical challenge of Judaism continue to be met in future generations, or to remain relevant even for this one.

### III   iii                      Cultural Institutions

#### A   Libraries, Archives, and Research

The Jewish Public Library in Montreal was founded in 1914, and has the distinction of being the oldest and probably still the largest Jewish lending library in North America. When founded, it served mostly a Yiddish-reading public, but as the years passed, a larger number of English and Hebrew books have also been in circulation. The Library houses the Bronfman Collection of Jewish Canadiana, and many archivistic treasures.



There are smaller Jewish public libraries in Toronto and Winnipeg. In addition, some Jewish organizations sponsor circulating libraries of their own.

The National Archives of the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) contain historical documents dating back to the very beginnings of Jewish Settlement. A publication called "Canadian Jewish Archives"; in mimeographed form, reprints documents and materials to stimulate interest in Canadian Jewish history. The Canadian Jewish Historical Society, founded in 1963, has regular meetings at which appropriate papers are read.

The Research Bureau of CJC has initiated projects that have been of inestimable value in assessing the population movements of the Jewish community, social and economic trends, etc. Academic and governmental social scientists continually make use of its findings. CJC also assists independent researchers whose work will be of interest to Canadian Jewry.

#### B Hebrew Cultural Organization

The Keren Hatarbuth Organization, now affiliated with the Zionist Organization of Canada, encourages the study of Hebrew as a spoken language, and sponsors many classes in Hebrew language instruction throughout the country. It runs two summer camps - one in the west, one in the east, at which campers speak, and conduct all activities in Hebrew. The Organization also sponsors lectures on



modern and ancient Hebrew culture.

#### C Franco-Jewish Organizations

The work of the Cercle Juif de Langue Française in promoting cross-cultural exchange between French-Canadians and Jews has already been mentioned. The Cercle Juif published, in September, 1965, an anthology entitled Les Juifs et la Communauté Francophone containing essays on French Canada, and on Jewish culture in the French language, both in Canada and in France itself.

A French-language organization, the Amitiés Culturelles Canada Français-Israel, founded in 1963, has as its co-chairmen Monsignor Irenée Lussier, rector of the University of Montreal and Judge Harry Batshaw of the Superior Court in Montreal. It too aims at strengthening ties between French-Canadians and Jews, but its scope is international as well in that it encourages closer cultural ties between Canada and the State of Israel.

#### D Others

The Jewish Music Council of CJC has done much to stimulate Jewish interest in music, and general interest in Jewish music. It sponsors concerts of Jewish folk music, cantorial chant, symphony presentations of modern works, and it annually commissions new compositions from Canadian Jewish composers.

On certain annual occasions, notably the anniversaries of



the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and of the Declaration of Israel's Independence, Jewish communities across Canada organize commemorative programs. The Warsaw Ghetto Memorials are co-sponsored by most Jewish organizations in the community, and they commemorate not only the Uprising itself, but the destruction of European Jewry of which it has become the symbol. Israel Independence Day celebrations are initiated by local branches of Zionist Organizations, also in co-operation with other institutions.

Jewish summer camps, and Jewish youth movements usually stress cultural programming, such as the production of Jewish plays, folk-dancing and folk-singing, through which both eastern European and modern Israeli songs and dances are transmitted.

Hillel Foundations for Jewish students can be found at many Canadian universities. They do not involve more than a small percentage of the total Jewish student population, but they are fairly active in bringing Jewish scholars to address the students, and in sponsoring discussions of Jewish interest. The larger Hillel Centres publish monthly bulletins, and the University of Toronto's foundation has been especially successful in maintaining a high calibre of publication.

### III iv

### Yiddish Culture

Given the relatively cohesive nature of Canadian Jewry, particularly in Montreal, Winnipeg and Toronto, it is not surprising that Yiddish cultural expression flourished for many decades, and



though noticeably declining, still pays an important part in Jewish life.

#### A Literature and Learning

Montreal, as early as 1900, acquired a reputation as a vital centre of Yiddish culture, a reputation that arose because of the number of Yiddish intellectuals who settled there, and that in turn attracted still others. Alexander Harkavy, compiler of dictionaries and philologist, Reuben Brainin, noted Yiddish and Hebrew writer, Dr. Symcha Pietruszka, prolific scholar, all lived in the city for many years, and made it a known centre of learning. Harkavy put out a Yiddish periodical called Di Tsait (The Times). Brainin was one of the moving forces behind the creation of the Jewish Public Library, and editor of the Canadian Jewish Eagle between 1912 and 1915. Dr. Pietruszka produced two great works of modern Jewish scholarship during his Montreal sojourn - a two-volume Jewish Popular Encyclopedia and a six-volume edition of the Mishnah with Yiddish translation and commentary.

More recently, Israel Rabinovitch, for several decades the editor of the Canadian Jewish Eagle, wrote Of Jewish Music, Ancient and Modern, a notable contribution in the field of musicology. The book is available in the English translation of A.M. Klein. Benjamin Sack's History of the Jews in Canada, originally written in Yiddish,



and later translated into English, remains the basic reference book in this area, and the second volume is now being prepared for publication.

Other significant scholarly works include three books of Midrashic Literature, translated from Hebrew into Yiddish, with textual emendations and extensive notes, by Shimshon Dunsky; N. Shemen's study of social attitudes towards labour, based upon Biblical, Talmudic, and Rabbinic writings; the same author's works on the role of Hassidism in our times.

An interpretive study of Yiddish writing in America remains to be written, but when it is, the section on Yiddish prose and poetry in Canada will be extensive. Foremost among Canadian Yiddish poets is Jacob I. Segal (1897-1954) whose twelve massive published volumes contain mostly lyrics, short, delicate poems. Segal was born in Poland, came to Canada when he was fourteen years old, worked as a shoe-operator, later as a teacher. His themes and images, like those of most American Yiddish writers, are often taken from the old world experience, but he also wrote poems about Canada, and Montreal, and his relation to both. Miriam Waddington and A.M. Klein have each translated some of Segal's work <sup>1</sup>. but the bulk of it remains unavailable to English readers.

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1. Waddington, Miriam. "Yakov Yitzhok Segal, Canadian Jewish Poet", Tamarack Review, Autumn, 1960, pp. 36-42.



Melech Ravitch, "dean" of Canadian Yiddish letters since his arrival in Canada in 1939, has written several collections of poetry, a three-volume Story-Book of My Life, innumerable essays, feuilletons and reports in Yiddish publications of every country. He directed the Folk University of the Jewish Public Library for a decade, and initiated many Yiddish cultural undertakings in Montreal.

In 1934 a volume entitled Yidishe Dikhter in Canada (Jewish Poets in Canada) by H. Caiserman, then Secretary of Canadian Jewish Congress, listed 43 writers, all but 9 of whom wrote in Yiddish. Since that time at least a dozen other Yiddish authors settled in Canada where they continue to write of the old country and the new. Rochel Korn, who has lived in Montreal since 1948, is a two-time recipient of the Lamed Prize, the most prestigious award of the Yiddish literary world. Isa Massey (1893-1962) was the author of several volumes of lyrical poetry, and of books for children. Jacob Zipper, principal of the Jewish Peretz Schools in Montreal, published two semi-autobiographical novels, dealing with his native town of Wolhyn.

Selected works of these, and other writers such as Moshe Shaffir, Peretz Miransky, Yehuda Elberg, Chava Rosenfarb, N. Gotlib and Joseph Rogel, could be of interest to the general reader if presented in adequate translations. Melech Ravitch writes in an essay on which much of this information is based that "the time is ripe for the publication of an anthology of Canadian Jewish writing of the past



four centuries...which would depict the growth of an important Jewish community and as such would be useful to both Canadians and to Jews the world over." 1.

B

Yiddish Theatre

Indigenous Yiddish theatre, when it did flourish in Canada, took root in the west, in Winnipeg, rather than in the more populous Jewish centres of the east, probably because the latter were too close to New York, and inclined to import that city's professional productions. A Jewish operatic company was first founded in Winnipeg in 1904, providing "low-brow" entertainment. Its competitor, the Yiddish Dramatic Club, undertook more serious productions, and continued to be active until the 1940's. 2.

In Montreal, the "Iteg", an amateur group under the direction of ChayeLe Grober, performed in 1941 and for a few years after. Similar short-lived companies were founded in Toronto and in Ottawa. But for the most part, Yiddish theater in Canada consisted of visiting road company productions that continued to attract capacity audiences until very recently. Hertz Grosbart, World-famous Yiddish Monologist,

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1. Ravitch, Melech. "Yiddish Culture in Canada" in Canadian Jewish Reference Book and Directory, 1963. p. 80
  2. Chiel, Arthur A. The Jews in Manitoba, University of Toronto Press, 1961. pp. 119 ff.



Yiddish theater is largely a thing of the past, except for occasional amateur productions. Various synagogues and organizations present amateur shows each year, but these tend to derive more from the Broadway musicals than from the Yiddish dramatic repertoire.

In his book of memoirs, Journey of My Life, Hirsch Wolofsky described his many years as publisher of the Canadian Jewish Eagle which enjoyed an uninterrupted, though sometimes troubled, existence since 1907. Discussing the relationship its readers had with the newspaper, he wrote: "There are many Jewish readers of the Eagle who believe that the local Yiddish newspaper is the highest court of appeal in all matters touching communal affairs. To editorial opinion<sup>1</sup> they attach a certain sanctity, almost infallibility". In 1963 the Eagle was compelled by financial difficulties and diminishing readership to shrink from daily to tri-weekly publication. Yet it maintains its function as authoritative interpreter of local and distant Jewish happenings, and is probably awaited no less eagerly, though by an older and sparser readership.

1. Wolofsky, Hirsch. Journey of My Life. Montreal, 1945, p. 174



Dos Yiddishe Vort was published in Winnipeg for 53 years; it has now become part of the Israelite Press, which includes a Yiddish section in its otherwise English issues. The Yiddish press has been recognized as the foremost "Americanizing agency" in Jewish life for the role it played in introducing generations of immigrants to their new environment. Canadian Jewry was particularly fortunate in that its Yiddish newspapers attracted a high calibre of editors and contributors. Many of the leading poets and writers remain among its regular columnists.

The decline of the Yiddish press is directly related to the decline of Yiddish as a spoken language. The percentage of Jews giving Yiddish as their mother tongue dropped from 95.4 percent in 1931 to 76.2 per cent in 1941; from 50.6 percent in 1951 to 32.4 percent in 1961. The erstwhile proliferation of Yiddish journals, reviews, and periodicals in Canada has also slowed to a trickle, and both writers and readers rely more and more heavily on foreign Yiddish publications.

### III v

### The Jewish Press

While the Yiddish Press has declined, the Anglo-Jewish Press has expanded and improved. Toronto's Canadian Jewish News and bi-monthly Jewish Standard; Montreal's Canadian Jewish Chronicle; Winnipeg's Jewish Post, Israelite Press; and the Western Jewish News all seem to have raised their standards of reporting and editing during the past few years. These papers now lean less heavily on syndicated material, and include a little more local and national coverage, and such



features as book-reviews, community profiles, editorial analyses of events of Canadian Jewish interest.

The Vochenblatt, organ of the Communist-oriented groups in Toronto, is a weekly publication offering its own interpretation of local and international events. There are, in addition, the monthly publications of the Zionist Organization of Canada, The Canadian Zionist; of the Canadian Jewish Congress, The Congress Bulletin and Bulletin du Cercle Juif; as well as the Ottawa Hebrew News, and the Windsor Jewish Community Bulletin. The Canadian Jewish Review attempts no more than to list the social events in various Jewish communities, but the recently-founded Canadian Jewish Digest is a helpful compendium of articles of wider interest. There has been talk, during the past year, of a journal of Canadian Jewish affairs, on a serious analytic level, but it remains to be seen whether such a project can receive the necessary support.

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A study of culture within the Jewish community is a study of change: the language of expression is changing, the institutions are in a state of flux, the modes of expression are being adapted to the requirements of a new, Canadian-born-and-bred population. There are those who look back with deep sorrow to all that is being left behind. There are others who have little apprehension about the future, but anticipate new more effective outlets of Canadian Jewish creativity.



IV                      The Future: Assessment and Aspirations.

Although the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, for its purposes of enquiry, defined Jews as an ethnic group, it should be noted that they are also a religious group, or primarily a religious group as some would insist. In the course of their history, Jews have spoken various languages and have been identified with various ethnic characteristics, but the religious basis of Judaism has remained the unbroken link between generations. This reminder is especially important in interpreting the figures of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

In the censuses of 1931 and 1941, less than .2 per cent of Jews by religion reported themselves to be non-Jewish by ethnic origin, and less than 1.5 per cent of Jews by ethnic origin reported themselves to be non-Jewish by religion.<sup>1</sup> In other words, almost all Canadian Jews before 1941 defined themselves as Jews according to both ethnic origin and religion.

However, of the 204,836 Jews by religion enumerated in the 1951 census, 11.3 per cent were reported non-Jewish by ethnic origin; and of the 254,368 Jews by religion in the 1961 census, 31.9 per cent reported themselves non-Jewish by ethnic origin. In other words, today

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1. This information, and the explanation cited below, are based upon Louis Rosenberg's article on Canada in the American Jewish Year Book, 1964, Vol. LXV, New York, American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication Society of America, 1964, p. 160.



almost one-third of Canadian Jewry does not recognize itself as being ethnically Jewish, but defines itself as Jewish only according to religious affiliation.

One interpretation of these statistics is that "In the 1951 and 1961 censuses, the instructions to census enumerators suggested that where persons had difficulty in stating their ethnic origin, the language first spoken as a child or as a new immigrant could be taken as a guide to determine ethnic origin." <sup>1</sup>. Some replies may have been based on this interpretation. But generally, the explanation appears to be very lame; nor does it account for the three-fold increase in ethnic disaffiliation between 1951 and 1961. More probably, the census figures fairly accurately reflect a new kind of self-definition. The ethnic characteristics of Canadian Jewry before 1941 -- Yiddish language, folklore, customs, foods -- are identified with the eastern European period, and many Canadian-born Jews may feel no association with them whatever. As previously stated, the acknowledgment of Yiddish as mother tongue is declining, and to many young Jews, chow mein and pizza are at least as familiar as gefilte fish. Undoubtedly these Canadian Jews feel that their Judaism, like someone else's Anglicanism, belongs in the category of religious differentiation. This view is reinforced by constant reference, particularly in the United States,

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1. Ibid, p. 161.



to Judaism as one of the three major religions, and by the general decline of ethnic group cohesion in America. We may conclude that the nature of Jewish identification is shifting from ethnicism to religion; but future studies must determine to what extent this is a semantic change only, and to what extent it represents a genuinely new self-image.

The question is asked: What does Canadian Jewry want? What are its aspirations, its fullest hopes for the future? Because of the extreme diversity of the Canadian Jewish population, at least three different replies may be ventured:

----The ultra-orthodox and Hassidic Jews, whose arrival and influence were discussed in the opening section, aspire to remain true to their traditions. They try to educate their children as thoroughly as possible in keeping with their own interpretation of Jewish and secular knowledge. They mistrust most signs of innovation or acculturation as being designed to weaken their religious and ethnic cohesion. Though small in numbers, the group is disproportionately dynamic; of all segments of the Jewish group, it has the greatest clarity and single-mindedness of purpose.

----The majority of Canadian Jews walk the tightrope between Canadianism and Judaism trying not to fall over on either side. That is to say, they wish to be accepted as committed, complete Canadians who have as important a role in Canada's future as the sum of their



individual efforts will allow them to play. They would probably like to be a little more at home with other Canadians, particularly on a social basis. They feel an increasing resentment towards any form of discrimination, no matter how subtle.

On the other hand, most Canadian Jews would like not only to maintain the vestiges of a Jewish identity, but to find a viable way of living more fully as Jews. There seems to be a growing impatience with fund-raising and socializing as the sole form of Jewish activity. Young parents speak of giving their children "a Jewish education I never had."

The aims of this majority are therefore ambivalent and unclear, a situation that is reflected by the changing, fluid state of so many of the community's institutions. There is a fear of being "too Jewish", however this may be defined. There is also a fear of losing completely one's reasons for being a Jew, and thereby sacrificing an integral part of one's identity. The aspirations lie somewhere between.

----There are also those, again probably less than 10 per cent of the total Canadian Jewish population, for whom being Jewish has lost all meaning, and who do not regret the loss. The rate of intermarriage among Jews has been rising steadily, which reflects, in part, the diminishing emphasis on corporate group identity. There are few



conversions. Those who cease to consider themselves Jews do not generally seek an alternative to Judaism, but decline identification with any religious or ethnic group. Disaffiliation today is more often the result of indifference to Judaism than of active rejection. And the aims of these disaffiliated Jews are probably private aims, one of which is a desire to be regarded as unclassified individuals.

One of the most concise statements of the needs and aspirations of Canadian Jews was made by Saul Hayes, Q.C., executive vice-president of Canadian Jewish Congress in his keynote address to the 14th plenary session of CJC, in May, 1965. An excerpt from his speech provides a fitting summary for this report:

The real problem is not this kind of assimilation through marriage and defection into the general life of the non-Jewish world. It is rather the extent to which the prevalent culture makes it impossible to live in two worlds simultaneously. In other words there is no danger of the Jew losing his statistic in the census returns, but every danger that he and his children will be nothing by statistics insofar as Judaism or Jewishness are concerned....there is really no problem of survival at all if by survival we mean existence. There is an enormous problem of Jewish living. <sup>1</sup>.

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